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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000125

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
AFR/SA FOR E. LOKEN  
COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2011  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [Z1](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)  
SUBJECT: ZANU-PF SENATOR/FINANCIER PURSUES ENHANCED  
BILATERAL DIALOGUE

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

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Summary  
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1. (C) Aguy Georgias, a recently appointed ZANU-PF aligned Senator and CEO of Trinity Engineering, on January 31 sought Embassy participation in an informal dialogue he hoped to set up with a to-be-named interlocutor selected by President Mugabe. He asserted that in Zimbabwe's dysfunctional political environment, only Mugabe was capable of shifting the country's disastrous course and reorienting Zimbabwe toward the West, which offered its only real prospect for salvation. He recognized that real bilateral re-engagement was predicated on meaningful political and economic reform but urged that the USG be open to building a rapport that could presage progress. End summary.

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Call for Dialogue  
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2. (C) Elaborating on points conveyed generally to the Ambassador at a social event January 19 (including in a shared paper that Embassy e-mailed to AF/S), Georgias emphasized his personal priority on improving bilateral relations. He asserted that each government had backed itself into a corner rhetorically and ordinary Zimbabweans were paying the price. Decline had gone too far for Zimbabwe to pull itself out of the spiral by itself; foreign assistance and economic engagement with the West were Zimbabwe's only hope.

3. (C) Accordingly, the ruling party financier said he would try to use his personal relationship with Mugabe to impress on him the country's need of the West, and the prospects for rapprochement. In this regard, he hoped to have Mugabe identify a trusted subordinate who could meet with the Embassy to explore options for refurbishing the relationship. He solicited Embassy views on how to establish an informal dialogue and make it fruitful.

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Party Dysfunctional; "Mugabe the Key"  
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4. (C) Georgias stressed that President Mugabe himself held the key to changing the country's disastrous course. He said that Mugabe was increasingly isolated from events but still had authority. He got little good advice and the party saw little meaningful debate. A growing generational divide further hampered communication. Mugabe knew he couldn't trust his politburo and cabinet, most of whom either were so absorbed in economic self-aggrandizement or too politically insecure to actively support meaningful outreach to the West.

5. (C) Georgias admitted that internal fear and loathing would complicate any outreach to the West. He warned that the ruling party's senior leaders had become so divorced from the national interest that the party would not necessarily reorient itself to the West once Mugabe moved on, as many expected. Convincing the octogenarian autocrat, he concluded, offered the best and perhaps last chance of changing the country's course.

6. (C) The West could help in this regard, Georgias maintained, by appealing to Mugabe's "legacy" concerns (i.e. vanity and security). He asserted that the starting point for moving Mugabe lay in "language of respect", regardless of how tough the West was in pressing its conditions for re-engagement. Georgias recognized the USG's position that any rapprochement would have to be predicated on meaningful political and economic reform, but suggested Mugabe's ego meant that conditionality themes should be subordinated to "confidence-building" at the outset of any informal exchanges that may ensue.

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Ambassador's Door Open But(  
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17. (C) In response, poloff reiterated points earlier conveyed by the Ambassador during the January 19 exchange. The U.S. door was open to ruling party and Government officials, but we saw little in the regime's behavior or posture that would justify improved relations. Better relations required meaningful political and economic reform as well as accountability. In addition, notwithstanding Georgias's view of prospects for Mugabe driving change, Mugabe appeared increasingly irrelevant. The whole party and country already had one foot into the post-Mugabe era. In closing, Georgias reiterated he would press his case with Mugabe for informal dialogue with the U.S. and the West.

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Bio Notes  
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17. (C) Georgias' Senate appointment probably was in recognition of his historical financial support for the party. He emphasized that he was not a politician and, indeed, we have seen no evidence that he is involved in factional politics. During our exchanges with him, he generally has eschewed personal criticisms, although he was excoriating in references to Security/Lands Minister Didymus Mutasa. He claimed to have "beaten" Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono on fair and amicable terms in substantial litigation a couple of years ago and remained on good terms with him. He further claimed to have earned Mugabe's trust for being honest in all his government contracting over the years, even as others were rigging contracts and brazenly skimming public funds.

18. (C) Georgias claimed to have been suffering from Zimbabwe's economic downturn like everybody else - his company's employment was down from 300 to 130. He said that one key to his business success was the "American work ethic" he had learned while working at U.S. firm Chicago Bridge and Iron Company early in his career. He said he was appalled at fast track land reform, and had intervened on behalf of several commercial farmers.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Georgias represents what appears to be a dwindling ZANU-PF-aligned business constituency that is disgusted with the ruling elite's &every-man-for-himself8 corruption. His assertion that Mugabe himself is best situated to re-orient the country westward is a throwback to better days that fails to understand the extent to which Mugabe has burned those bridges. The reality on the ground is that most Zimbabweans, whether ruling party supporters or not, are anxious to see the last of him. We don't see Georgias getting much purchase with Mugabe or others his call for a dialogue. That said, he may prove to be a useful conduit to Mugabe,s potential successors in the mold of senior Jesuit Fidelis Mukonori and politburo member Simba Makoni, and we continue to emphasize our willingness to talk to anyone as long as it's clear that reform is a predicate to any meaningful re-engagement.  
DELL